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SUBJECT: STRONG INDICATION OF MBEKI INVOLVEMENT IN COPE

Classified By: DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MADELINE Q. SEIDENSTRICKER FO
R REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

Summary

11. (S//NF) Former President Thabo Mbeki reportedly had a hand in drafting a six-page policy document for the newly formed Congress of the People (COPE) and has influence in how COPE is drafting a foreign policy vision, according to prominent University of South Africa professor Dirk Kotze. Kotze's comments serve as the strongest indication yet that the former South African leader may be assisting the party formed by many of his longtime allies. End Summary.

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Mbeki May Be Helping on COPE's Policy Formation
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12. (S//NF) Kotze, who has close ties to Mbeki allies Aziz and Essop Pahad, told Poloff in a meeting on December 5 that Mbeki appears to have significant influence in helping COPE form domestic and foreign policies. Kotze said he frequently meets with former African National Congress (ANC) spokesman, and Mbeki confidant, Smuts Ngonyama. At a meeting on December 4, Ngonyama brought a six-page document on COPE's proposed policy vision for Kotze's input. Kotze said, "Smuts made it very clear that it came from Mbeki." Moreover, Kotze said, "The document carried all the hallmarks of many of Mbeki's letters from the ANC." (Note: Mbeki for years as Deputy President and President wrote weekly letters on behalf of the ANC that were disseminated via the ANC website. End Note.) At the same meeting, Ngonyama also received a one-page foreign policy document that Kotze crafted outlining what foreign policy goals COPE should focus on as a political party. Kotze said, "Smuts, upon receiving my foreign policy ideas, told me he had to run it by Mbeki before any decisions are made." (Note: Kotze said he encouraged COPE to adopt a foreign policy that closely aligns South Africa with the West and pushes for a "peaceful" Africa. He offered to email Poloff the document. End Note.) Kotze said he and Ngonyama had a long conversation of what COPE should emphasize ahead of the election. He said that he encouraged the party to focus more on values and less on policies because "people care about values right now." Kotze said he also asked Ngonyama who would be the leader of COPE and the former ANC spokesman said, "We are still sorting out our leadership issues."

Comment

13. (S//NF) Kotze's comments are the strongest indication Post has seen that Mbeki may be putting his weight behind the new party. As a South African academic and foreign affairs specialist, Kotze has strong ties to the Mbeki crowd of the ANC and has been a good source of information for the Embassy since at least 2004. Meanwhile, Ngonyama has been one of Mbeki's closest allies since the former President took office in 1999, and there is little question he probably would be in some form of regular contact with his former boss. Moreover, anyone who has spent time reading Mbeki's letters on behalf of the ANC knows the former President's distinct writing style and policy penchants, and would be able to discern quickly whether the former leader had a hand in such drafting. Kotze gave Poloff Ngonyama's telephone number and encouraged him to call in coming days. Post will make every effort to contact him and learn more about whether Mbeki is involved.

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